Maundy Thursday Homily

It had all seemed like a dream now as they sat in that upper room. They couldn't help but think of those days, not so very long ago, when they sat on the green grass, under a blue summer sky and listened to him speaking: listening to words unlike any they had ever heard before:

"Blessed are the poor
Blessed are the meek
Blessed are the peacemakers
for they shall be called children
of God . . . "

They couldn't help but remember those days not so long ago when, as day ended and the sun was setting, the people still came to him; couldn't

help remember how they brought their sick, their elderly, their infants to receive his healing touch and blessing.

They couldn't help remember how happy they were when they ate together, how to their surprise and great joy, and the consternation of some, he had welcomed everyone it seems, to his table. There was room for all in his great heart.

It all seemed like a dream now as they sat in that upper room. Everything changed just a few days ago, the day they arrived in Jerusalem after the long walk down from Galilee.

The crowd had welcomed him to the city with a public demonstration,

shouts of Hosanna and Palm Branches waved. And they had known then that there surely would be trouble. The Romans had little tolerance for Jewish patriotic demonstrations.

Now it was Thursday night and it all seemed like a dream. The opposition to him was organized now. A plot to betray him and arrest him was underway. He seemed to have understood it as he gave them such specific instructions about meal preparation. He seemed to know that it would be their last supper together.

They were silent mostly as they took their places — reclining at the table. They would never forget that night. He washed their feet, went

around the table and washed the feet of Judas, Peter, James, John, the rest.

Then they ate supper. Talk was minimal, strained. What was there to say? When they had finished eating he broke a loaf of bread in two and said it was his body broken for them. And he passed around a cup of wine and said it was his blood shed. He asked them to remember him every time they broke bread and drank wine.

And he said he had a final commandment for them. "Love one another as I have loved you."

So we come to his table tonight to remember him.

Brokenness — brokenness in the Middle East, in Iraq and Iran and Afghanistan. Brokenness in Israel and Palestine. Brokenness between Jews and Arabs, Sunni and Shia. Brokenness in Darfur and Tibet and Kosovo.

Brokenness in the community of America — where racism — all the issues continue to fracture ideologically.

“Love one another” he says. It is the only answer to the world’s brokenness. “Love one another as I have loved you.”

The world needs that love. Our nation and community need men and

women who have been transformed by that love and are committed to love one another and to love the world in his name.

It seems like such a small thing: a weak and vulnerable thing to be talking about love in a world like ours. Surely that is how they felt as a net of intrigue tightened around him that night.

Yet, it is what makes this week holy — and this Maundy Thursday holy, and this sacrament holy. His love and our love in him. It is what will bring us back here on Easter morning — to witness and celebrate a love that is stronger than death.

And so may we remember him, our Lord Jesus — his love for them, for the world, for us. His love that would go to the cross. May we remember his dying love for us, and his simple commandment — that we should love one another as he has loved us.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Words of Institution

"On the night he was betrayed. . ."